

THE
 STORY
 OF
 SARAH DURIN,
 DEDICATED
 TO THE
 ADVOCATES
 OF AN
 UNJUST
 AND
 UNNECESSARY WAR.

Non ignara mali, miseris succurere disco.

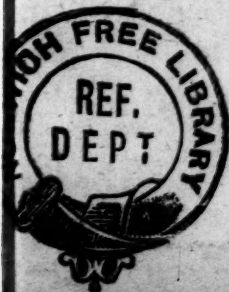
VIRGIL.

Verfed in Schools of Woe, to Sorrow's Children
 I can lend Relief.

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M,DCC,XCV.





THE
STORY
OF
SARAH DURIN.

I Have often heard it observed, that there can be no charity in relieving beggars; for where one meets with one real object in distress, twenty are impostors. The usual mode of ridding one's self of the importunity of an unhappy suppliant, is to *bid him go to his parish*, and hurry on, or slam the door in his face. As it has been my taste to mix a good deal with poor people, or, as they are called, the lower orders of mankind, and having constantly found among them more truth,

more virtue, and more sympathy than in the higher ranks of society, I cannot see a fellow-creature reduced to such extremities as to crave a small temporary assistance from a stranger, without stopping to inquire into the causes of his wretched situation. Whether this proceeds from curiosity or humanity, is of no consequence to any body but myself; certain it is, that instead of finding that observation just, I find it to be exactly the reverse; for out of twenty objects in distress, whom I have taken the trouble to examine and cross-examine, I declare that I have rarely found one impostor. Indeed, human nature must have arrived at the lowest pitch of degradation if it were not so; for what man would at first enter into so abject a mode of life, if the most urgent necessities did not compel him. It is true, that after being long habituated to infamy, he may become hardened; that having found one falsehood fail him, he has recourse to another; yet let any man of compassion, and it is no difficult matter, sift out the truth, though all these trumped up stories, and I am much mistaken

if

if he will not find the original cause ten times more distressful than any the poor beggar has invented. How little are the importunate cries of those miserable women attended to, who have reached the last stage of public prostitution. The nature of their crime steels some hearts against compassion, and others are disgusted at the grossness of their language, and the familiarity of their manner; and they are told with an air of menace, sometimes perhaps by the very authors of their ruined and calamitous situation, to seek their parish. "Seek my parish—What! thoughtless debauchée," (might one of these unhappy victims well retort,) "can I return to that place from whence you seduced me, clothed with vice and infamy; can I bear the frowns of those parents, whose hearts, at your instance, I have broken? No; rather would I starve or die as I am now doing by inches in these streets, than encounter the reproaches of those who knew me in my innocence."

By giving myself the trouble to enquire a little into the situations of those who implore my assist-

ance, it may be naturally imagined that I must have heard many a piteous tale : It is not long since, one, I think the most sad and cruel I have met with a long time, occurred, and which I cannot forbear relating to the public.

In my way from the north of England, I overtook, on the turnpike road, a poor woman, rather cleanly, though raggedly dressed, with three young children by her side, and a boy about ten months old in her arms ; besides this, she had a large bundle on her back ; I was much struck at this group of apparent distress, for they seemed all miserably tired, and made very, very slow progress on their journey ; I pulled up my horse, and followed them for some time at a distance ; at last one of the children, a girl about six years old, dropped down from fatigue ; this circumstance obliged the mother to stop, and as they were resting upon a bank by the road side, I passed by. The anxiety which was strongly painted in the countenance of this poor woman, encircled by her weary children, compelled me to gaze upon them with pity, which encouraged the mother

ricks, and every thing else that we are not able to carry away. I can't think but what this must be wicked. Only think, Sarah, what these poor souls must suffer; it would wring your heart to hear their cries. I never could take a single thing from them, though I have been sorry to see some of my comrades so hard hearted; there are very few of our men so cruel, but as to the Austrians, they have got no more feeling in 'em than a stone.

You can't think, Sarah, how we be all hated by our Allies, as the Minister called 'em; they all say, if it had'nt been for us, they should never have gone to war, and that 'twas all our fault. One of our majors was like to have a duel the other day with a Dutch officer about it. I wonder our folks don't make it up, for we shall never gain the day. Mind and kifs Sally, and Dicky, and Harry for me, sweet little lambs, I can never think of 'em without crying. I hope, my dear Sarah, you had a good time of it; I should like to

to know if 'tis a boy or a girl. I hope all the neighbours be kind to you, now I am fighting for 'em. So no more at present,

My dear Sarah,

From your loving husband,

RICHARD DURIN.

„ Soon after I had received this letter, Sir, I began to be in great distress, for the money that Richard left, was almost gone, and I was so bad after my lying in, that I could not do much work. Richard's old master, who used to be very good to my children, went to America, and then I lost the best friend I had in the world; however, I made a shift to get through the summer, but this hard winter made every thing so dear, that I could get nothing but bread for my children to eat, and, at last, that rose so high, that I could never get 'em half a belly full; indeed, Sir, you rich gentlemen don't know half what we poor people go through, every thing is rose so 'tis impossible to live, and, in spite of all I could do, we be obliged to come
to

to the parish, where I am going now, but God knows how we shall be able to get there, or how they'll treat us; for as soon as they found at Manchester that poor Richard was dead, and that we must all come upon the parish, the officers got an order from the justices, to have us moved to our own parish, which is down in Suffex. If you'd like to read it, Sir, here is the last letter I had from my poor dear husband:

DEAR SARAH,

THIS is the last time you'll ever hear any more of your poor husband. We have undergone such hardships in our retreat from Holland, as nobody can imagine that was not with us. Officers and men have been frozen to death upon the road; I never thought I should have lived when I saw so many dying by the road side, and 'twould have been all one now if I had not, for as soon as I got here, I was ordered out upon duty, and got shot through the hip and part of my body. I am now lying in the hospital, and my
wounds

wounds have begun to mortify. I hope it will please God to let me finish this letter to you, my dearest wife, which will be something better than if you heard of my death from any body else. My sufferings will soon be all over, but it grieves my heart to think of you and my poor children. I am afraid you'll all come to the parish, tho' I hope not, for I never could bear the thoughts of that. Our enemies say their wives and families are all taken great care of in their country, and to be sure, so ought ours, if folks did but consider what we went through. I can't bear to think how happy we lived before this terrible war broke out. There must be a great many poor souls, I dare say, as bad off as you, for nobody can think what a number of men the war has carried off. I don't know who were the beginners of it, but they'll have a great deal to answer for; I hope God will forgive em'. Take all the care you can, my dear Sarah, of our poor children, and don't let 'em forget how fond I used to be of 'em. I hope they'll all turn out honest; I always wished to live to see 'em able to get their living,

but

but there, that's all over now. Good bye, Sarah,
I never thought two years ago, that all our happiness would have come to this.

So no more,

From your dying husband,

RICHARD DURIN.

The reflections which this poor woman's distress and her sad story brought to my mind, will never be effaced; surely, if ministers are wicked and headstrong enough to persist in this ruinous and destructive war, every attention ought to be paid to the families of its unhappy victims, and not suffer them to come upon the parish, which is and ever ought to be considered in a degrading light, however excellent and humane the institution itself must always be considered. Would it not be worthy the Legislature of this country, to devise some better mode of relieving parishes from the burthen of their extra-paupers, than by subjecting these poor creatures to all the hardships and inconvenience

inconvenience of a removal, sometimes from one end of the kingdom to the other.

I expect to be told, that any innovation would be attended with numberless difficulties, perhaps, it may be attended with some temporary inconvenience, though, I think, nothing would be easier than for a parish that is burthened with extra-paupers, to charge their maintenance upon their respective parishes, and to have their accounts regularly settled by Justices of the Peace ; at least, the comforts and convenience of the most numerous and most useful of our fellow-creatures deserves the attention and consideration of Parliament, and there can be no doubt that a mode, in all probability, better than the one I have suggested, would soon be found out to remedy this evil, which, as long as it lasts, will cast a reflection upon our poor laws, unworthy the wisdom and beneficence of their intention.

Inner Temple,

April 6th, 1795.

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